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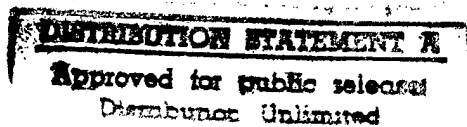
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General Eugene E. Habiger

Commander in Chief, U.S. Strategic Command

Feb. 27, 1998

"Strategic Deterrence in the 21st Century"

It is an honor for me to stand before this group. I have several messages that I'd like to pass on to you and I certainly appreciate the opportunity.

The roll of strategic command in making the global engagement vision a reality can seem vague and on the periphery. But trust me, exactly the opposite is true. Our mission was essential in the past and I would submit, is crucial today as we embrace the global engagement concept. Nuclear deterrence is at the core of American national security strategy. Joint Vision 2010 defines the primary task of our Armed Forces to deter conflict, but should deterrence fail, to fight and to win. This is what we do at Strategic Command: deterrence. It is what we do each and every day, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

A basic issue that I want to talk to you about has to do with why we are still in the deterrence business? The Cold War has ended. Why do we still need a deterrent force? When the Cold War ended, it didn't end with parades and banner headlines. It ended with a fizzle. Ladies and gentlemen, I would submit that the loser really didn't lose in the traditional sense. When the Cold War ended, the loser retained its arsenal, including several thousands of nuclear warheads on alert. Because the Cold War ended in such an ambiguous manner, it has been hard to make our message heard--our message is that we still need to be around. I am going to talk a lot more about that later because I feel very strongly about this. When we fought World War II, 18 months after Pearl Harbor General Marshall had a group in the War Department looking at a post-World War II world. I would submit the end of the Cold War snuck up on us and we've been paying the price ever since.

Clearly the world has changed a great deal in the last decade. It is a safer world. Through all this change, one thing remains constant and that is our unwavering emphasis and focus on deterrence. Although there are a wide-variety of threats to our national interests, only one threat can bring us to our knees and that is the nuclear threat. Obviously, a remote, and I emphasize, a remote possibility, but one that exists and must be considered.

These same threats also exist for our allies. Through extended deterrence, which extends our nuclear deterrent umbrella to all of those allies, and assures them protection, we help ensure global stability. As a result of our allies confidence in our capabilities, those nations forego the development of nuclear weapons. This results in the enhanced security of our allies, which in turn enhances global stability. At the same time, another important national security objective is supported and that is halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons which began during the Cold War.

Because of the threats that remain today, our strategic forces remain the corner stone of our national security strategy, our ultimate insurance policy. And, by the way, the premium on that insurance policy is a bargain. That premium is about 4% of the entire annual DoD budget.

I tell a lot of people that we are a low-maintenance command and I really mean that. That is a good news-bad news story. Because of some wise decisions made in the 70s, 80s, and early 90s, we have a force that should serve us well for the next 20 years or so. I know you are not interested in submarines much in this group, but let me tell you that the Navy just upgraded the service life of their Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines from 20 years to over 40 years. That will save us many dollars in the future. As to our bomber force, I cannot be more pleased with the B-2. It came into our warplan on 1 April of last year. The B-1--and a lot of people are not aware of this--went out of the nuclear business on 1 October of last year.

Now let me talk to you a little about the B-52. We use the B-52 today very differently than the way we used it during the heart of the Cold War. When I first started pulling alert on the B-52, we had four gravity weapons and the mission, if called upon, was to go screaming across the Soviet Union at 300 feet. We don't do that anymore. We use the B-52 as a truck. We load it up with 20 cruise missiles and, outside of harm's way, we launch those cruise missiles. I will tell you, ladies and gentlemen, those airplanes came off the assembly lines in the 1961 time frame. It looks like a 1961 Oldsmobile. It drives like a 1961 Oldsmobile. And, it smells like a 1961 Oldsmobile. But it still does the job and it does it very, very well. Let me put this in perspective for you. We tend to think of airplanes like the Boeing 757 and the Boeing 767 as pretty new airplanes. The average number of hours on the Boeing 757 flying commercially today is 26,000 hours. The average number of hours in the Boeing 767 today is 20,000 hours. The average number of hours on those B-52s today is about 14,500 hours. What we have is a 1961 Oldsmobile that was driven by a little old lady.

Another thing you need to understand--because this is a big deal and a lot of people haven't thought much about it--is that I get beat up a lot about not being a bomber advocate. In 1993, for a number of reasons, and I am not complaining, combatant command of all bombers went to the Commander in Chief of Atlantic Command. I have no operational control over those airplanes until they CHOP (Change of Operational Control) to me at the appropriate time. I will also tell you that thanks to the good work and his articulate way of telling the story, General Dick Hawley, at Air Combat Command, has been the bomber advocate. I can pound the table and tell the nuclear side of the story, but only General Hawley can pound the table and tell both the nuclear and conventional side. He is doing an absolutely superb job.

Let me just briefly talk about the KC-135s. I require a little over 200 of those KC-135s to do my job. Eighty percent of those 200 airplanes come out of the Air Force Reserve and Air Guard. I could not be more pleased with the support I get out of that total Air Force team.

Finally, our intercontinental ballistic missiles. The Peacekeeper will go away under Start II. The Minuteman III is fully funded. We are going to upgrade the guidance system, and we are replacing the propellant in all three stages. Those missiles should be good until about the year 2020, or so. What we are going to need to do in about the 2010 period is start looking at budgeting for follow-on systems. We have already started talking with the Air Force about this.

I will also tell you that while we are not doing very much of anything except maintaining our forces, the Russians, on the other hand, are continuing to put lots of resources into the modernization of their strategic forces. They have four major weapon systems that they are pursuing. First, is a new intercontinental ballistic missile, the SS-27 (Topol-M). Marshal Sergeyev, the Minister of Defense, and General Yakavlov, the Commander in Chief of the rocket forces, went out on Christmas Eve of last year to declare that system operational. The Russians laid the keel in late 1996 for a new Borey (Arctic Wind) class ballistic missile submarine. We expect to see that submarine by about 2005. The Russians are also very actively pursuing a new sea launched ballistic missile to go on that new submarine. We expect to see that go operational about the same time. Lastly, to upgrade the third leg of the triad, they are investing quite a bit of money in a new air-launched cruise missile that will modernize their bomber capability. My point to you is, the Russians are out there. They are continuing to modernize their forces and they are pursuing that with a great deal of aggressiveness.

The downside of what I've just told you is that because we are not developing any new systems at this time, we have put our industrial base at risk. We must ensure that the expertise and the capacity to sustain these systems and to develop follow-on systems at the appropriate time is not lost. We are watching this very closely.

As we enter the 21st century and leave the Cold War behind us, a number of things will remain constant. The nuclear threat, at least for the time being, will remain. Although we have developed a professional relationship with Russia and their military members, they retain more than enough nuclear fire power to destroy our nation. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has not decreased. In fact, it has

increased. As more and more countries seek to acquire these deadly arsenals, the threat of regional conflict with the inherent risk of escalation into the use of weapons of mass destruction remains a serious concern.

Let us not forget China. At this point, they are not an enemy; they are not a foe. But with one quarter of the world's population and the fourth largest economy, they are something that we need to keep on our radar scope. They are modernizing their strategic forces and they have the potential to become a global peer competitor early next century.

Although the threats from the past and the present will shadow us into the 21st century, there is some good news. We no longer have bombers on alert, loaded with nuclear weapons. Our intercontinental ballistic missiles, as well as the Russians', are no longer targeted at each other on a day-to-day basis. While this action is reversible, and not verifiable, it shows how far we've come over the past several years. We now have a very successful military-to-military contact program with our Russian counterparts. They have come to the United States and we have visited Russia on many occasions. Just another significant step as we build closer ties and improve confidence.

My thanks to the Air Force Association's last issue of the Air Force Magazine--at the end of it there was a reprint of a press conference I gave in November of last year talking about my very unique experience--being the first non-Soviet, non-Russian ever to visit a Russian nuclear weapon storage site. I will tell you--and I only went to this one base--but, if what I saw was representative of what they do with their nuclear weapons, the Russians are indeed very serious about the safety and security of their nuclear weapons.

During that visit, I had several hours of discussions with General Yakovlev, who is their ICBM commander. We agreed on the spot that he would send some of his security people to visit our nuclear weapon storage sites to see how we apply technology--they are very manpower intensive in the way they do business. That will occur in the first couple weeks in May. We also agreed to a shadow program where we will exchange the equivalent of a wing commander, group commander, squadron commander, flight commander and a missile crew member. The first visit of a Russian team to come and shadow their counterparts for one week will take place in early April.

Cooperative threat reduction, otherwise known as the Nunn-Lugar Act, is another home run. It allows the Secretary of Defense to allocate resources to help the Russians dismantle their nuclear weapons, civilianize their nuclear weapons programs, and improve security of nuclear weapons and components. Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to accompany Secretary Cohen to a Russian cooperative threat reduction training facility 40 miles outside of Moscow. It was a most impressive display of the technologies we are providing the Russians to ensure the safe and secure downsizing of their nuclear forces.

Let me talk for a few minutes about arms control. It took us 8 years to negotiate START I, which brings us down to 6,000 accountable strategic nuclear warheads. It took us 8 months to negotiate START II. The United States has signed and ratified START II. The Russians have signed the treaty, but the Duma, their parliamentary house, has not yet ratified this treaty. I am convinced that this treaty, which will bring us down to 3,000-3,500 strategic warheads will be ratified by the Duma sooner rather than later. I also think (looking into my crystal ball, which is not nearly as clear as it may appear by my comments here), the Russians will immediately want to go to START III, which will bring us down to the 2,000-2,500 level. That is good news for them, for us, for everyone. In my view, START IV will take much longer because, if you just do the math, it is clear that the Russians will want to bring in the British, the French and the Chinese. When you go from bilateral to multi-lateral negotiations of this type, it is going to take a long, long time.

With all these positive things happening, one might think it is time to get rid of nuclear weapons. I talk about this issue a great deal, but because it is not sensational news, I don't get nearly the media coverage as many of the vocal anti-nuclear advocates get. Let me make a few points. There is this group that advocates the total elimination of nuclear weapons--they've been doing this for over two years, and they

have received a lot of attention. If you remember nothing else of what I say this morning, remember this. THIS AIN'T NEW NEWS. The official policy of the United States of America for the past 30 years has been the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We were one of the first nations, in 1968, to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Article VI of that treaty says that the ultimate goal of the treaty is the total elimination of nuclear weapons on planet Earth. Then you have to read the fine print. The fine print says, given the proper preconditions. That is the hang up: Given the proper preconditions. I will tell you--and I am not a zealot for having nuclear weapons on board forever--I think it is going to be difficult, if not impossible, to ever get that genie back into the bottle. We are on a stable, rational, verifiable glide path to get down to lower and lower nuclear weapon stockpiles. That is the right thing to do.

Next, we have a group that advocates de-alerting our nuclear weapon arsenal. Again, I have a little bit of a problem with this because we are on the right glide path--it is stable, rational and verifiable. During the Cold War, each side had about 5,000 nuclear weapons on alert staring each other in the face. We have about 2,300 today. With START III, I predict we will have less than 700 weapons on alert. There have been a number of individuals very actively involved in de-alerting. I invited three of them to spend a full day with me and it was a good visit. Some of the things I determined were that, first of all, they were not fully informed and some of the information that they were passing out to the media was wrong. For example, the day that they came in mid-January, the New York Times published an editorial pushing for all of the ICBMs to be taken off alert; similar to what the United States had done in 1991 when we took all of Minuteman II off alert. The editorial said that the Russians reciprocated our action by taking a segment of their missiles off alert. But, our act in 1991 to take those 450 Minuteman II off alert was a unilateral act. Gorbachev said in a press conference that they would take an equal number off of alert. He went back to Moscow; he was slam-dunked by his military folks, and those missiles never came off alert. That was a unilateral action on behalf of the United States.

As we draw down our nuclear forces, the character of our remaining forces will be more important than the actual numbers of warheads. We must remember that deterrence is much more than just a bean counting exercise. It is a package of capabilities. Deterrence, simply stated, is the potential for a massive, unambiguous and totally devastating "gut shot" provided by a diversified, dispersed and survivable force. As I said earlier, the fundamental purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter the use of weapons of mass destruction. They are also to act as a hedge against the overwhelming conventional capability that may loom in the future. This does not mean that we will necessarily use nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack. It does mean that we require flexibility in the range of options we have available. In support of this, we are evolving into a more flexible and diverse command. We support regional CINCs by providing theater nuclear support and counter proliferation planning.

How does all this tie back to global engagement? Global engagement is based on a new understanding of what aerospace power means to our nation - the ability to hit an adversary's strategic centers of gravity directly as well as prevail at the operational and tactical levels of warfare. Like the eight other unified commands, we shape, respond and prepare. We actively shape the world through programs such as our military-to-military activities. We will continue to shape our world through counter-proliferation efforts, arms control initiatives and expanded military-to-military contact programs reaching out to include the Chinese. We respond by providing theater nuclear support and counter-proliferation planning to our regional CINCs. As the needs of our regional CINCs change, we adapt and respond, always ensuring our deterrence is viable. Finally, we prepare for the future very well so that we are always ready, so that any potential enemy never doubts our abilities and so we do not have to respond with our military might. This is the deterrence that has proved so effective for over 50 years. This is the deterrent force that is downsizing on a stable, verifiable glide path.

With fewer numbers of weapons in an increasingly complex world, we must ensure that the readiness of our deterrence force is not an issue and never doubted by those who would test us. We do this by ensuring our systems are maintained, modernized and tested--within treaty limits--not only so they are ready for use, but so they will never have to be used.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today and a special thanks to the Air Force Association for what you are doing, not only for us in this unified command but for the Air Force. Your work in

getting the word out to the public, Congress and within our own ranks concerning the importance of aerospace issues is instrumental as we pursue our national security interests. Never forget, ladies and gentlemen, peace is still our profession.

Gen. Shaud: You are engaged in the debate clearly and as reference out questions from the audience here. The first one, General Habiger, you recently visited Russia and what dealing with nuclear weapons is all about is command and control, did you note any diminishing in the effective of Russian command and control?

Gen. Habiger: None at all and that is a good question. The Russians were very open. They took me from the national level command centers down to the numbered air force level, to the wing level, to the regiment level, out to the field mobile command center. I was impressed with what I saw. The thing that impressed me was the fact that any individual in that chain can cut out the launch order; that is, disable the launch sequence. They are concerned about the control of the nuclear weapons. It is a very serious matter for them. I saw nothing that would give me pause or concern. The only thing that I saw that gave me a little bit of concern was in Vladimir Yakovlev's command center in Moscow. He had a big briefing board he was briefing me on and he had a laser pointer. The laser pointer was about two inches in diameter and about 14 inches long. It had a big cord that went back to a power supply box and when he punched the button, there was a big red spot and the lights went down from the voltage drain; then there was a hum. I just prayed that he wouldn't accidentally shine it in my eyes and blind me (laughter).

Gen. Shaud: The next question has to do with strategic modernization. It begins with an assertion. The assertion is that there doesn't seem to be much support for strategic modernization to include the nuclear side. What is on the books when current systems end their useful service life?

Gen. Habiger: Again, another good question. But it is one of those things because of some very wise investments and because we are realistic, we are a low-maintenance command. What we have, like the advanced cruise missile--we have 360 of those--are good, stealthy, accurate and reliable. As I said the B-52s are a 1961 Oldsmobile. It is very capable to serve us as a truck. For me to be talking about follow-on systems at this point is somewhat counterproductive. But the point I would make to you and the point I make on the Hill and when I talk to groups, is that we need to start thinking about a wedge in about 2008, 2010, perhaps a little sooner, for some funding. We need to start thinking outside the box. General Estes at Space Command has done a lot of thinking about space. I am not saying we are going to put weapons in space, but we need to start thinking about other technologies because if you just look at the advancements that we've made over the last 20 years, 20 years into the future we may have new technologies to fall back on.

Gen. Shaud: A couple questions about negotiations. The first one, how will post-Start II negotiations affect ICBMs? How do you see that?

Gen. Habiger: I don't want to give away the farm. But I would say that if you just look at the START III numbers, which is 2,000-2,500, we are going to have to make some trade-offs. At this point, I am not ready to tell you what that force structure is going to be. I would submit that there is going to be some decrement in at least two legs of the triad and it could very well impact our ICBM force. At this particular point--and again, one of the things I am most proud of the folks at Strategic Command--we are looking at arms control and we are not just focusing on START III, we are looking at START IV and START V. This is a chess game. Because in the year 2015 we don't want to go, wow, why did we cut up those bombers in 2002? We are trying to get as far out in front of this thing as we can.

Gen. Shaud: The continued negotiations become increasingly complex. Part of this complexity is the result of this precision strike capability with conventional munitions. Will this play in post-Start II negotiation?

Gen. Habiger: I hope not. I have briefly discussed this with the senior Russian leadership. I will discuss it again. In mid-March we have General Yakovlev coming over. I am going to show him a lot. Also, we've made a break through, the commander of their bomber force is coming, General Oparin. I hope with General Hawley's support, and he is very supportive, we are going to take him to a B-52 base, a B-1

base to show him that the B-1 is a conventional bomber only and also to Whiteman to show him the B-2.

Gen. Shaud: The last question CINC has to do with motivating the troops. With a lot of latter day Bertrand Russells and abolitionists, is this having an effect on the morale of the crew force?

Gen. Habiger: It gets them fired up.